

Linking Your Performance Plans

Overview and Tools



FFAS Human Resource Division

Table of Contents

Topic	Page
Context and Background.....	1
Methodology	1
Tools to Assist You	3

Tools	Page
Terminology.....	4
Alignment Worksheet	5
Alignment Worksheet Samples.....	6
Aligning Your Performance Plan	7
Tips and Examples for Writing Objectives.....	9

Context and Background

The President's Management Agenda addresses five government-wide initiatives, including Strategic Management of Human Capital. To achieve a rating of Green on the Scorecard, every agency needs to ensure that individual performance plans are linked to agency goals.

All USDA agencies are required to link the performance plans for Senior Executive Service (SES) members and GS-15 and GS-14 managers and equivalent positions (e.g., Senior Foreign Service and Domestic/Overseas Foreign Service) to agency goals.

By June 10, 2004, the Agency must ensure that all performance plans for SES members and GS-14 and GS-15 employees reflect performance objectives that cascade down from the Agency's strategic goals. This alignment effort will also help the Agency achieve a Yellow rating on the Scorecard during the July scoring efforts by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

To get to Green in 2005, 60% of all employee plans need to be linked to higher-level goals. You need to be thinking about how you will make this alignment with your employees' performance plans. SES members and managers will begin this next level of goal alignment to the remaining workforce beginning in October 2004.

Methodology

The table below illustrates the process for cascading goals from the Agency to managers to employees and the documents that support the alignment. You may also be aware of other documents that provide information about goals and objectives (e.g., the Logic Model).

Group	Planning Document
President	President's Management Agenda
Department	USDA Strategic Plan John Surina memo, <i>President's Management Agenda (PMA)--Achieving a Results-Oriented Performance Culture</i>
Agency	FSA, FAS, RMA Strategic Plans/Annual Performance Plans FSA Logic Model
Deputy Administrator	Goals and Objectives
Division	Goals and Objectives
Branch	Goals and Objectives
Individual Managers	Goals and Objectives

Methodology (continued)

To begin aligning goals, you should start with the defined goals of the Agency (i.e., what is FSA, FAS, RMA trying to accomplish). The FSA Logic Model may help you to identify these goals. Next, your supervisor will have goals that support Agency goals. Communicate with him or her to obtain that information.

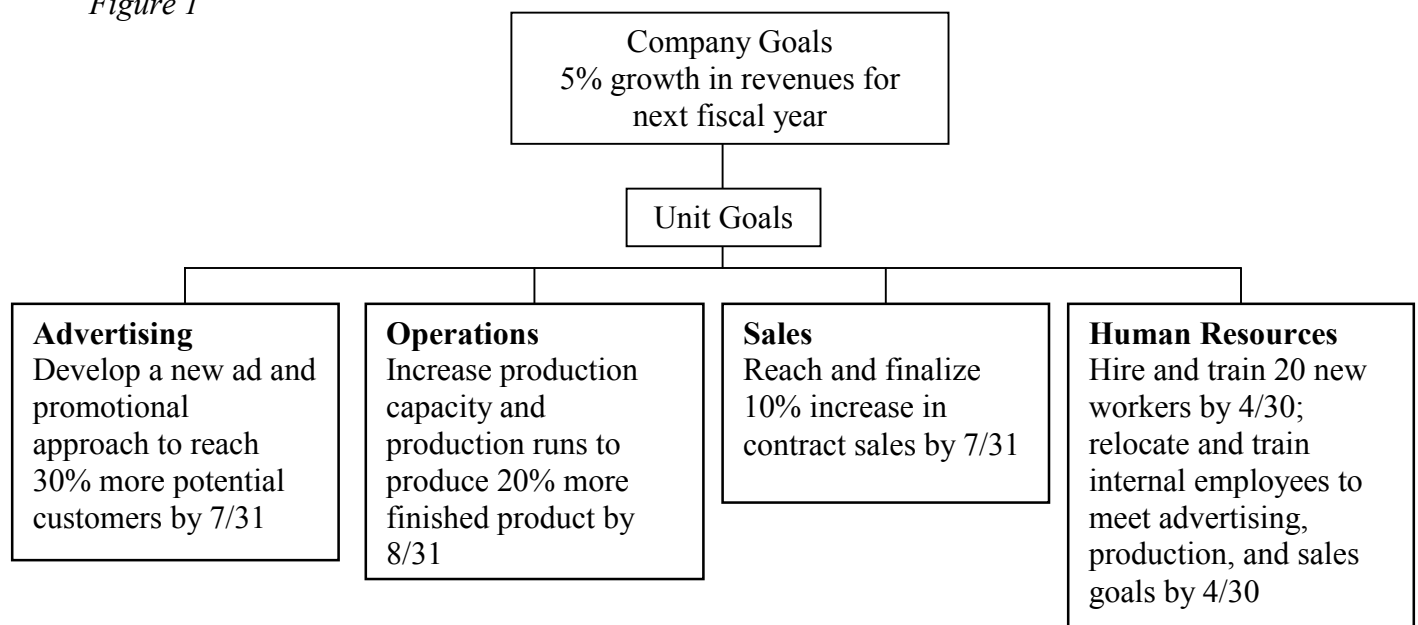
Next, look at what the GS-15s need to do to support the SES member in accomplishing the goal and then what the GS-14 needs to do to support the GS-15 and/or SES member. (*Note:* Some SES member plans may cascade to GS-14 instead of GS-15.)

- By starting with the Agency goal and working down, you can ensure goals are linked down through the organization.
- Beginning in October 2004, the next step is to look at what employees below the GS-15 and/or GS-14 need to do to support these managers in reaching their goals (thus helping to achieve Agency goals).

Small Business Example

Figure 1 is a generic example illustrating the alignment process. Let's imagine you are running a small restaurant and you want to grow revenue for next year by 5%. The key parts of the organization that can help achieve that goal are advertising, operations, sales, and human resources. Each group asks itself what it needs to do to reach that organizational goal of 5% growth.

Figure 1



What is interesting is that no one has the goal of increasing revenue 5%. It's not a one-to-one match; it is a strategic planning exercise. So you cannot cut and paste the senior level objective in for yourselves.

Methodology (continued)

Small Business Example (continued)

It's also not giving one goal to one group, and one goal to another. Instead, it's looking at how all the parts of the organization can contribute to the organizational goal. Objectives cannot be randomly handed out; they need to align with what each supporting group can accomplish. It took a lot of thought to identify what each unit needs to accomplish to reach the overall goal.

Tools to Assist You

Terminology

These definitions ensure that those tasked with linking performance plans are working from the same set of definitions.

Alignment Worksheet

The Alignment Worksheet is a tool that has been developed to help you organize and identify goals for the alignment exercise.

- First, be clear on your organization's goals. Then link them back to higher-level Agency goals.
- Next, identify the organizational or higher-level goal in which you have a major role in accomplishing.
- Then, determine the specific objectives you need to achieve in order to play that major role in impacting the goal.
- Finally move these objectives into your performance plan.

Alignment Worksheet Samples

This document provides two samples of linked goals and objectives.

Aligning Your Performance Plans

This document walks you through the step-by-step process of creating objectives and incorporating them into your performance plans.

Tips and Examples for Writing Objectives

This document provides tips to create objectives that are results-oriented and not process or task-based. It provides examples of effective and ineffective objectives.

Terminology

The following table lists some key terms that relate to the alignment of organizational goals to individual performance standards.

Term	Definition
Performance Plan	The written document, which includes all performance elements and the standards for those elements that together define expected performance for an established time period.
Critical Performance Element	Work assignments, responsibilities, or objectives of such importance that unacceptable performance in the element would result in a determination of overall unacceptable performance.
Performance Standard	Performance standards are management-approved expressions of the performance threshold(s), requirement(s), or expectation(s) that employees must meet to be appraised at particular levels of performance. Each critical element must have a Fully Successful or equivalent standard established.
Objective	Specific measurable accomplishments expected of an employee to support the achievement of organizational goals.

Alignment Worksheet

Higher Level Goals	Organizational Goals	✓ *	What specific objectives should I achieve?

Alignment Worksheet Sample 1

Higher Level Goals	Organizational Goals	✓ *	What specific objectives should I achieve?
<p>Enhance Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers [USDA Goal 1]</p> <p>Improve the Nation's Nutrition and Health [USDA Goal 4]</p>	<p>Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of commodity acquisition, procurement, storage, and distribution activities to support domestic and international food assistance programs, and administer the U.S. Warehouse Act (USWA). [FSA Goal 4]</p>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the efficiency of commodity purchasing and delivery systems by participating in interagency activities to enhance the food ordering, inventory management, delivery systems and improve the electronic bid entry systems. • 50% of enhancements, that are within Commodity Operations control, are completed in less than 12 months.

Sample 2

Higher Level Goals	Organizational Goals	✓ *	What specific objectives should I achieve?
<p>Successful Alignment of Human Resources Functions to Support FSA in Meeting Organizational Goals</p> <p><i>(Management Excellence-Addendum to Logic Model)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve strategic alignment of human capital • Support NFP and deployment • Increase leadership continuity and knowledge management • Improve results-driven culture • Improve acquisition and utilization of talent <p><i>(Intermediate Outcome Strategies)</i></p>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all 100% of SES, GS-14, and GS-15 managers' performance plans are aligned with mission, goals, and organizational objectives by July 1, 2004. • Design and implement a performance appraisal program that effectively differentiates between various levels of performance by end of FY 04.

Aligning Your Performance Plan

NOTE: This job aid refers to specific columns on the Alignment Worksheet. Use this job aid and the worksheet to create your cascading goals.

What to Do	How to Do It
Identify the defined goals of the Agency.	Write the goals in the first column, Higher Level Goals, on the alignment worksheet. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the Agency’s Strategic Plan or Annual Performance Plan. (FSA employees may also use the draft Logic Model.)
Identify the goals of your Senior Executive Service (SES) member and/or organization and how those goals each support Agency goals.	Write the goals in the second column, Organizational Goals, on the alignment worksheet. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk with your supervisor and/or refer to already-known organization goals that have been shared with you and your organization.• You may also wish to speak with colleagues or your immediate supervisor who attended the workshop.
Identify the organizational or higher-level goals in which you have a major role in accomplishing.	Place a checkmark in the third column next to the goals that you directly impact. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on goals that you can directly contribute to or have control over. Consider the following questions when identifying these goals.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– What is the role/function of your particular group?– What is your particular role/function?– Given your role/function, which organizational goals can you influence or contribute to most directly?
Determine the specific objectives you, as a GS-15, need to achieve in order to play that major role in impacting the SES goals. Also, GS-14s should identify what they need to do to support the GS-15 and/or SES member. <i>Note: Some SES plans may cascade to GS-14 instead of a GS-15.</i>	Write your objectives in the last column, What specific objectives should I achieve. Use the job aid, Tips and Examples for Writing Objectives. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask yourself the following questions to ensure your objectives support the higher-level goals.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– To influence or contribute to the organizational goals you identified, what specific accomplishments must you achieve? How would you know whether you have successfully achieved those accomplishments?– If I/we do the things I/we say I/we will, will the goal get accomplished?

Aligning Your Performance Plan (continued)

What to Do	How to Do It
Move the objective(s) into your performance plan.	<p>Add a new element called “Mission Results ” to your existing Performance Appraisal Form using one of the following FSA/RMA Forms, AD-2000 or SCA 4140 or AD-435A—FAS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no need to acquire additional signatures/dates to the forms at this time. <p>Write in a generic standard for the new element. You may use the following wording: <i>Measurable results that relate to mission goals or the support of mission goals.</i></p> <p>List your results-oriented objectives beneath the standard. Ensure the objectives meet the criteria on the job aid, Tips and Examples for Writing Objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attach updates using a separate sheet of paper if there is not enough room on your performance plan.• If you already have five elements, delete an element to bring the total to five when Mission Results is added. <p>After each objective, indicate in parentheses the USDA and/or Agency goal(s) to which the new objective links.</p>
Obtain final approval.	Submit your revised performance plan to your rating official. It is between you and your supervisor to agree to these objectives.
Use Your Resources.	Contact Cheryl Fuller (202-418-8973) for additional information.

Tips and Examples for Writing Objectives

- Should be written in positive, active voice; do not create negative objectives.
 - Instead of: Will not let the loss rate increase past 5.1%.
 - Use: Keep loss rate below 5.1%.
- Focus on tasks that are not minor or recurring (e.g., hiring, number of reports produced).
- Ensure you have control and/or influence over what you're trying to accomplish.
- Where possible, apply the following suggested wording formats to help you get started:
 - Do _____ by _____ so that _____.
 - Do _____ by _____.

For example: Implement the final rule by October in order to provide additional flexibility for loan restructuring.
- Be outcome focused, not task focused.
 - Instead of: Issue regulations.
 - Use: Implement the final rule by October in order to provide additional flexibility for loan restructuring.
- Be quantitative and/or qualitative to allow for measurability.
 - Quantitative focuses on units of measurement (e.g., time periods, units of measurement, amounts).

Example: Deliver the proposed rule change for the interest assistance program to OMB by end of 2004.
 - Qualitative focuses on describing how well something must be accomplished.

Example: Facilitate effective delivery of farm loan programs to internal and external customers by establishing policy and procedures that meet customer need and demand within the statute.
- Be sure objectives are reasonable and achievable.
 - Be sure objectives can be exceeded. Do not make them stretch goals.
 - Focus on what you can accomplish by the end of the fiscal year, September 30, 2004.